

A BETTER INVESTMENT

I work with an organization that delivers food to Eugeneans experiencing homelessness, including those who sleep in Washington Jefferson Park. The city of Eugene just spent \$67,000 to build fences that push these individuals out of the park. The reasons cited by the city have to do with safety and health hazards. To respond:

- People without housing are at higher risk of becoming victims of theft, assault and sexual violence than those who have shelter. Also, the overpass provides protection from the elements, which reduces the already high risk of health problems such as pneumonia. The fences have made an already unsafe situation for the campers even more dangerous.

- Sure, human waste, garbage and needles have no place in a public park. But with \$67,000 to spend, wouldn't public restrooms, trash cans and sharps containers be better (and cheaper) investments?

This fence project will not make homelessness in Eugene go away. The only thing that will is more shelter. The campers are not in the park by choice. There is literally no other place for them to go, and now that they can't sleep there anymore, what options do they have left?

Christy Reynolds
Board President, Burrigo Brigade
Eugene

AN AUTHENTIC EDUCATION

Thank you, *EW*, for your education issue Feb. 25. In particular, I commend Amy Schneider and Daemion Lee. Amy Schneider's in-depth coverage of IP 28 is an example of journalism of the highest caliber. In order for our students to flourish and get the attention they deserve, we must hire more staff to reduce class sizes. We need more counselors and nurses to help our students, many of whom are living in poverty. We need to create authentic, project-based assessments and step away from our obsession with expensive high-stakes standardized testing, which Daemion Lee highlighted in his excellent interview with Jesse Hagopian.

Hagopian and Wayne Au, social justice educators from Washington, recently led a lively discussion on these topics to a crowd of almost 160 people at a Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE) event held at First Christian Church on March 4. If you missed this, be sure to attend another thought-provoking event about reclaiming public education at 7 pm Monday, March 28, at the UO Ford Alumni Center where David Berliner, author of *50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools*, will speak. As high-stakes standardized testing season is upon us, remember that public education was not

always like this. Once upon a time and not so long ago in classes with an appropriate student-to-teacher ratio, teachers had the freedom to educate our youth using creative, meaningful assessment. Come listen, learn and discuss how we can do better.

Laura Farrelly
Eugene

HISTORY OF OPPRESSION

The *EW* mission includes this phrase: "We provide a voice for the oppressed and dismissed, and support unfettered artistic expression." Seems like you applied the second part of this rubric but ignored the first, in allowing Ben Ricker's anti-Springfield hatchet job to appear March 10. With respect to Eugene, Springfield has long been oppressed and dismissed. To make amends, ask Camilla Mortensen to write a story about the many times Eugene business leaders have screwed over Springfield, starting in the 1870s.

Alice Parman
Eugene

TAKING THE COMMONS

Am I the only one who thinks that Eugene's city planners are trying to do to Kesey Square, and elsewhere, exactly what Ammon Bundy and his lackeys tried to do to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge?

Both groups want to take public property and privatize it for "better" uses — that is, more profitable uses, for exploitation by private individuals or corporations. The only difference seems to be that the illegal group carried guns and wrapped itself in a warped notion of patriotism, and the other carries law books and wraps itself in bureaucracy and even more blatantly selfish and dishonest pragmatism. This is not how the public well-being is served; it should not be business as usual on behalf of the already rich.

Michael E. Stamm
Eugene

CHASING THE HOMELESS

I read the letter by Vicki Webb March 17 and found myself in 100 percent agreement. Criminalizing the homeless by putting up fences, placing boulders under overpasses where homeless have tried to find shelter from the elements, just shows what a lack of constructive thinking governmental agencies display. If this issue wasn't so sad, it would almost be humorous.

Given the image of city, county and state bureaucracies running around chasing the homeless from one area to another — in the vain hope of doing what? If the city spends \$250,000 annually to

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Radiant Art
is Back

NEW POLITICAL SILLY SEASON STARTS

OK, enough about Oregon's February legislative session. Nothing happened except the minimum wage increased and Oregon banned coal as an energy source. Democrats bragged about those issues and about fixing Portland's affordable housing crisis. In their press releases, Republicans described February as "the most destructive month in Oregon legislative history," and predictably bragged about their obstruction and attacked the "one-party" Democrats. Whatever. I'm still pissed that the Democrats used a Trojan Horse bill to make *Canis lupus* a sacrificial lamb. Bad biology, governor.

Now that I've gotten that off my chest, let's get to the sexy, slimy and expensive season of ballot measures and the May primary, followed possibly by the most bizarre presidential race in U.S. history in November. It's obviously too early to tell whether either party will nominate at this point. As we get closer to Oregon's May 17 primary, we may have a clearer picture. My focus will be the down-ticket effect of the presidential race on the November general election here in Oregon. Whether it's Hillary or Bernie vs. Trump, Cruz, Rubio or Kasich, any combination could impact turnout and the results of our governor's race, our secretary of state race, and our contested local legislative, County Commission, mayoral and City Council races.

Let's say it's Clinton vs. Trump. What would turnout look like? The key to Democratic success in November is turnout, especially women and young voters. Given that the top three contested campaigns in Oregon could involve women — Hillary, Kate Brown in the governor's race and (probably) Val Hoyle in the secretary of state race, there shouldn't be much of a gender problem — especially in the shadow of Justice Scalia's departure. I would hope students, as well as women, will see how important it is to have the correct successor on the U.S. Supreme Court for the next 30 years. The fear that Donald Trump might get to make that call should help turnout

among young Democrats, independents and reasonable Republicans.

Hillary is no shoe-in; Bernie blindsided her in the Michigan primary. Combined polls expected Hillary to win by a 20 percent margin, and predicted Bernie had only a 1 percent chance of victory. Nate Silver, editor of the polling website FiveThirtyEight, called it "among the greatest polling errors in primary history." He says pollsters got the results wrong in part because they underestimated both student turnout and student enthusiasm for Sanders. Also, no one predicted 62 percent of Democrat males over 50 would vote for Bernie in that primary.

In Oregon, controversial ballot measures could have an effect on November's turnout. With minimum wage and anti-coal initiatives probably off the table, the only legislative business left undone was the perennial issue of an inadequate state tax system to support K-16 public education and programs for our most vulnerable citizens. Our Oregon, a progressive network backed by public sector unions, is circulating Initiative Petition 28, which would raise \$2.6 billion for schools, health care and senior services through a gross receipts tax that would only affect companies with sales over \$25 million. Even though Oregon ranks 11th lowest nationally in corporate tax burden, the business lobby will fight hard. I smell a lot of money being spent on both sides in that fight.

Speaking of money, one other initiative petition appears headed for the ballot, a move by the grocers to privatize liquor sales in Oregon. *Willamette Week* recently reported Albertson's has already given the campaign \$1.6 million, probably the most ever spent in Oregon on a measure that hasn't even collected the signatures needed to qualify for the ballot. Crazy.

Speaking of crazy: How did Congressman DeFazio get so lucky? He might draw Art "Radiant Me" Robinson as an opponent for the *fourth* consecutive time! Friggin' Groundhog Day! Art only lost to Peter by a margin of 69 percent to 31 percent in 2012 and 2014. In 2010, Art got 44 percent of the vote, but that was only because it was his first run and nobody knew how batshit crazy his views were on background radiation and race.

This time Art has a primary opponent, Jo Rae Perkins, who finished fourth in a five-way Republican primary for the 2014 U.S. Senate seat, losing to Monica Wehby (remember her?). I want Art to win the Republican primary for the same reason I want Trump to win his primary. Why? Because as comedian Ron White once said: "You can't fix stupid." Voters of both parties know that. Stay tuned.

Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a former state senator and a recently retired state employee.